

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TH, BM, SNAR
SUBJECT: THAI-BURMESE RELATIONS AND THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT

1. DURING COURSE OF THE AMBASSADOR'S COURTESY CALL ON RTG'S NEW UNDER SECRETARY FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS WONG PHONNIKON DEC 16 LATTER RAISED THE SUBJECT OF THAI-BURMESE RELATIONS IN REFERENCE TO THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO STEM THE FLOW OF NARCOTICS FROM THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE. ANY SUCH EFFORT, HE OBSERVED, REQUIRES CLOSE COOPERATION BETWEEN BURMA AND THAILAND. HE THEN WENT ON TO ASK IF USG COULD PLAY A "GOOD OFFICES" ROLE IN BRINGING THE RTG AND GUB CLOSER TOGETHER. THE AMBASSADOR RESPONDED THAT IT WAS DIFFICULT TO SEE JUST WHAT SORT OF INTERMEDIARY ROLE USG MIGHT PLAY BETWEEN TWO SUCH CLOSE AND ANCIENT NEIGHBORS, ADDING THAT BURMA SEEMED STILL SUSPICIOUS OF ALLEGED RTG MANEUVERINGS WITH THE HILL TRIBES AND BURMESE DISSIDENTS IN THE NORTHERN BORDER AREAS.

2. WONG ADMITTED THAT THIS WAS ONE, BUT HE FEELS THAT THE MOMENT TO IMPROVE THE RELATIONSHIP WITH RANGOON IS NOW. HE MENTIONED THAT HE HAD GONE TO THE AIRPORT LAST WEEK TO MEET WITH THE BURMESE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER WHO WAS TRANSITING FROM TOKYO TO RANGOON (HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHICH OF THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERS) AND HAD MADE THE POINT TO HIM THAT THERE IS NOW THE POSSIBILITY FOR REAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS IN THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT AND THAT SUCH A SPIRIT OF COOPERATION COULD BE EXPANDED AND APPLIED TO THE ENTIRE SPECTRUM OF BILATERAL ISSUES. WONG IS CONVINCED THAT THE USG, RTG AND
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GUB CAN MAKE COMMON CAUSE IN THE EFFORT TO SUPPRESS THE DRUG

TRAFFIC. HE SAID THAT HE HAD PROPOSED TO THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER THE POSSIBILITY OF OFFICIAL LEVEL CONTACTS IN THE HIGHLANDS, TO WORK OUT ARRANGEMENTS FOR A JOINT THAI-BURMESE ANTI-NARCOTICS CAMPAIGN AND SUGGESTED THAT U.S. OFFICIALS MIGHT ALSO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH MEETINGS. HE DID NOT SAY WHAT THE BURMESE OFFICIAL'S REACTION HAD BEEN BUT HE IMPLIED THAT IT HAD BEEN FAVORABLE. THE AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT IF BOTH GOVERNMENTS WISHED AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN SUCH MEETINGS, THE USG WOULD CERTAINLY CONSIDER SUCH A POSSIBILITY. HE WENT ON TO SAY THAT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE ANTI-NARCOTICS EFFORT IN RECENT MONTHS HAD BEEN THE TRULY INTERNATIONAL CHARACTER IT HAD TAKEN ON INVOLVING NOT ONLY THE USG AND THE RTG, BUT ALSO OTHER GOVERNMENTS (BRITISH, CANADIAN, AUSTRALIAN AND DUTCH) WHICH HAD NOW EITHER ASSIGNED OR WERE CONSIDERING THE ASSIGNMENT OF NARCOTICS' SPECIALISTS TO THEIR MISSIONS IN BANGKOK. HE THEN PROMISED TO REPORT WONG'S REMARKS TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HUMMEL (WHO WAS AN AMBASSADORIAL COLLEAGUE OF WONG'S IN RANGOON IN THE PAST AND WHOM WONG DESCRIBED AS AN OLD AND CLOSE FRIEND) AND TO AMBASSADOR OSBORN IN RANGOON.

3. COMMENT. THERE WAS SOMETHING OF AN "OFF-THE-TOP-OF-THE-HEAD" QUALITY OF WONG'S REMARKS SO IT IS DIFFICULT TO KNOW HOW MUCH OF WHAT HE SAID HAS BEEN VETTED WITHIN THE THAI GOVERNMENT. NEVERTHELESS, HE IS A FRIENDLY, INTELLIGENT MAN WITH WIDE EXPERIENCE IN BURMA HAVING SERVED TOURS AS FIRST SECRETARY IN THE THAI EMBASSY THERE AND LATER AS AMBASSADOR. HE OBVIOUSLY HAS CONTINUING CONTACTS WITHIN THE GUB. WE FEEL THAT HIS IMPULSE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS BETWEEN RTG AND GUB SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED AND WE INTEND TO "TALK THIS UP" WITH OUR OTHER CONTACTS WITHIN THE RTG. BELIEVE THAT ANY COMPLEMENTARY IMPULSE THAT EMBASSY RANGOON MIGHT BE ABLE TO GENERATE WITHIN THE BURMESE GOVERNMENT CAN ONLY BE A PLUS. AS FOR TRI-NATIONAL CONTACTS IN THE BORDER AREAS TO INCLUDE U.S. OFFICIALS, BELIEVE WE SHOULD DEFER TAKING A POSITION ON THE ADVISABILITY OF SUCH PARTICIPATION UNTIL WE SEE WHAT FORM THE PROPOSAL TAKES.

WHITEHOUSE

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